



March 2022

When I first met Mitchell Cohen in the 1970s I sensed immediately that he was a very special young man with a talent for leadership. He was a red-headed, good-looking youngster, inquisitive, questioning, and showing talents that were later to be manifest to everyone.

At that time, our school population numbered 450 students, and Mitch was a standout even then. He and his brother Mark were the most intelligent, interested and outstanding students. Their mother and father were deeply involved in the synagogue, so it all came naturally to them. Mitch's early promise proved to be intuitive and accurate.

Once many years ago, Shelter Rock Jewish Center honored me and my late wife, Ricky, on our 10th anniversary as leaders of the synagogue. I was asked to name three students to speak. Of course, Mitchell was one of them. I had a brief insight into the fact that I had made a lasting impression on him. The other two students were Rabbi Edward Roth and Rabbi Lee Buckman, both of whom went on to storied careers. And Mitch became a superstar.

I am shocked to learn that he is now nearing retirement age. In my mind, he's still a kid. I remember when he used to go to Ramah California and met Cari and they built a beautiful life together. May God bless them and all of you, who see in him what he was meant to be, a natural leader of the Jewish people.

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